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ON THE HOME FRONT IN RURAL AMERICA

HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK
ANNUAL REPORT, 1940

FLORENCE L. HALL

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FOREWORD

The goals of home demonstration work -- better homes, good health, and successful family living in rural America -- assume new significance in these critical times. The farm homemaker, with her husband, has an important job in the national-defense program -- a part in the raising of certain foods for shipment overseas, in feeding her own family in keeping with the newer findings in nutrition, in guiding children in the ways of self-reliance and democratic living.

Home demonstration work is helping rural women to meet these new demands. More than 2-1/4 million women participated in the home demonstration program in 1940, an increase of 16 percent over 1939.

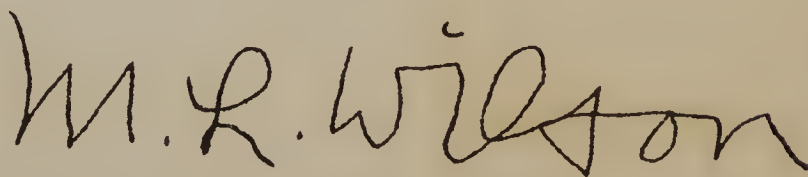
Of these homemakers, 1,140,723 were members of some 51,000 organized groups, meeting regularly to study ways of better living. In keeping with democratic procedure, each member has a voice in planning the community group program, which is based on local needs. Newer trends include special emphasis on nutrition, better housing, the making of cotton mattresses, electricity for farm homes, consumer education, and discussions on citizenship and democracy.

Homemakers are studying conditions affecting agriculture, serving on land use committees, and have an opportunity to express their judgment regarding needed agricultural adjustments.

As a result of home demonstration teaching, tens of thousands of improvements were made in farm homes and family living in 1940, ranging from better planned meals to installing electricity in the home.

Influencing more than 2-1/4 million homemakers to make definite improvement in their homes and living conditions is a distinct educational achievement. This would not have been possible without the aid of 286,000 unpaid volunteer leaders, who assisted the employed staff of some 2,500 home demonstration workers. These volunteer women, giving generously of time and energy, took special training, and passed their new knowledge on to neighbors in home demonstration clubs.

Here is democracy at work!



M. L. Wilson,
Director of Extension Work

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ON THE HOME FRONT IN RURAL AMERICA

HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK, 1940

By

Florence L. Hall, Senior Home Economist
Division of Field Coordination

BETTER HEALTH

Nutrition

As the Nation mobilized in 1940 for total defense and turned the spotlight on the relation of food to health, extension workers and farm families set new goals for the production of the home food supply. State extension committees on better living from the farm put renewed emphasis on working out teaching procedures for live-at-home programs based on State and county conditions.

Specialists in home economics and agriculture developed joint projects such as those in Kansas on butchering and preparation for freezer lockers and fruit and vegetable gardens and nutrition. Many States published colorful circulars with such titles as: Help Yourself to Good Farm Living (Mass.); What Do I Eat? (La.); Protect Health! Save Money! Use a Planned Family Food Supply (S. Dak.); Make the Farm Make the Living (Va.); Conserve Health and Wealth With Gardens (W. Va.).

South Carolina carried the live at home program on three fronts: (1) Honoring those farm families who really succeed in a 75 percent live-at-home program by presenting them with certificates at public county meetings. The phrase "good liver" is applied to this group; (2) A study of landlord-tenant procedures. Those landlords having successful plans and good relationships with tenants regarding home-produced food were given considerable newspaper publicity; (3) Definite plans to have the "good liver" reach the deficiency families, i.e., those not having an adequate live-at-home program.

Extension specialists in several States worked with seed companies in developing family garden seed packages with kinds and quantities based on health requirements, and with varieties suited to soil and climatic conditions of the State. This resulted in considerable savings to individual families, especially to groups of families that bought these seed packages in large lots. In West Virginia, approximately 3,500 families

DISTRIBUTION: A copy of this circular has been sent to each extension director; State and assistant State leader and county agent in home demonstration work; specialist in home economics; extension editor; agricultural-college library, and experiment-station library.

in 34 counties followed this plan of group buying, with an estimated saving to each family of \$3.00 or a total saving of about \$10,152.00.

Homemakers showed decided interest in the newer findings in nutrition. In California, for instance, women in home demonstration groups computed the vitamins and minerals contained in their meals for 1 day. Most of them found their diets below the minimum in calcium, many were low in vitamin C, and only a few were adequate in vitamin B₁. This device made the women conscious of a new motive for meal planning -- more vitamins and minerals for better family health.

Use of freezer lockers by farm families - a new aid to better nutrition - increased greatly. Home demonstration agents worked with homemakers in preparing food for the lockers, managing locker space economically, and using frozen foods.

About 480,000 farm families in the Southern States were helped to have a much better diet by meeting the specifications set by the AAA for a year-round garden as a soil-building practice, and by qualifying for the garden benefit payment.

Home demonstration agents continued to work with teachers, parents, WPA, and SMA workers on the school-lunch program. Approximately 27,000 schools followed recommendations for the school lunch or hot dish in 1940, and more than 187,000 families improved the home-packed lunch.

In the majority of States, volunteer leaders did considerable nutrition teaching in their local home demonstration clubs after receiving special training from the State extension nutritionist or home demonstration agent. More than 111,000 women or 39 percent of all leaders in home demonstration work served as nutrition leaders in 1940.

As a result of extension effort, thousands of families enjoyed a better-planned food supply in 1940, with more canned and stored foods, more careful meal planning, and wiser buying.

Table 1. - New levels of accomplishment for 1940 in the extension nutrition program

Accomplishment	Families 1940	Percentage of increase over 1939
Families:		
Serving better balanced meals.....	496,203	14.0
Assisted in reducing cash expenditures by producing larger part of food.....	593,331	20.7
Producing and preserving according to food-supply budget.....	379,706	57.9
Assisted in canning, preserving, fruits, vegetables, meats.....	991,483	59.0

Health Programs Other Than Nutrition

As in former years, home demonstration agents gave considerable attention to health work other than nutrition. They cooperated with State and county health agencies and local doctors in educational programs for control of pneumonia and cancer. Several States carried the project, "Let's have fewer colds"; many emphasized first-aid and home-nursing courses in keeping with the defense program.

Home demonstration clubs continued to sponsor local clinics in cooperation with health agencies. More than 194,000 persons had health examinations in 1940 on recommendation of extension workers, or took part in health contests. Of these, approximately 128,000 were 4-H Club members.

BETTER LIVING IN BETTER HOMES

Construction and Remodeling

New interest in home improvement was widespread, with large numbers of rural families in all parts of the United States devoting time, money, and skill to making their homes more comfortable, convenient, and attractive. Extension specialists held family meetings on house remodeling and repair, on installing water and electricity. Women volunteer leaders in North Dakota were given training and taught others to putty and weather-strip windows and to make minor house repairs.

Many Southern States continued housing programs which emphasize use of native stone, timber from the home place, and family labor. The Arkansas project, "Home-made homes," reached more communities as a result of having house-plan books and blueprints as a part of the equipment in every county extension office. Home builders' schools were held in all parts of the State, where instruction was given on how to select and treat logs and lumber, how to lay a foundation, how to put on a roof, and all other phases of house building.

According to Arkansas extension workers, farm families are able to build desirable farm buildings with at least 50-percent saving over conventional construction methods. In some cases, farm products are exchanged for hardware, cement, and other articles that are usually purchased, so that a four- or five-room house built with a cash outlay of only \$100 to \$125 is not unusual.

Several bulletins relating to housing were published during the year including these:

- South Dakota Improves Homes.
- A Sink in Every Tennessee Farm Kitchen.
- House Planning Ideas of Oregon Rural Women.
- Let's Add an Extra Bed. - Alabama.
- Kitchen Cupboards. - Michigan.
- Farmhouse Repair. - Nebraska.
- Safety for the Home. - New Mexico.

House Furnishings

The mattress program presented a new opportunity for extension workers to serve low-income families, with more than a million families making mattresses under extension supervision during 1940. This was a joint program conducted by the SMA, AAA, and Extension Service. In many States plans were worked out cooperatively with FSA. Results were far-reaching. As an Arkansas home demonstration agent put it, "This program has done more than supply mattresses to low-income families, it has given the home demonstration agent working contacts in every community." Some other statements on results are: "The program has reached new families and communities * * * has increased enrollment of 4-H and home demonstration clubs * * * has revived old clubs * * * has resulted in new clubs * * * has developed fun and fellowship * * * has created a neighborly spirit * * * has developed new leaders * * * has increased participation of low income families in entire extension program."

Electricity came to thousands of farm homes for the first time in 1940. Representatives of the Extension Service and REA worked closely together in developing local plans for expansion of electrical service. Home demonstration agents continued to give assistance on wiring, placing of outlets, correct lighting, selection and use of electrical equipment.

More than 127,000 kitchens were improved, under extension guidance. New equipment in some cases, better arrangement in others, lighter walls, and correct heights for tables and sinks, all combined to make housework easier for these thousands of homemakers.

Extension workers gave considerable help in connection with defense housing projects. In Virginia, for instance, in cooperation with the Norfolk Housing Authority, the extension specialist in home furnishings assisted in furnishing of a three-room housing unit, as a guide to families - mostly young couples who had not had experience in purchasing furniture and fixtures - who were to move into these houses.

In New York a group of volunteer women leaders active in the extension housing program, were given the opportunity to furnish a four-room demonstration "row" house in cooperation with the Buffalo Housing Authority. The house, an up and down stair, with two bedrooms, was already equipped with standard features--stove, refrigerator, kitchen cabinet, linoleum, and window shades. Working under the direction of the home demonstration agent and keeping before them the objective that the furnishings must be practical, livable, attractive, and meet the needs of a family of four, these women furnished the house for \$123.02.

A newspaper account stated, "These women visited every department store and haunted sales and second-hand stores, so some of the furniture is new, some second hand. Some was bought "knocked down" and put together by the women, some bought unpainted, in the rough, and painted by them." NYA girls did the sewing on curtains, draperies, and bedspreads.

This house was viewed by 10,000 persons. Later the furnishings were redesigned and moved to a house in another project which was visited by 18,000 people.

The Buffalo Housing Authority in expressing appreciation to the volunteer leaders said, "They gave generously of time and effort in making possible this splendid example of home furnishings. Their result was in keeping with the spirit of low cost housing."

Table 2. - Increased activities in extension programs in housing and house furnishings, 1940

Item	Number, 1940	Percentage of increase over 1939
Dwellings constructed or remodeled according to plans furnished.....	34,842	11.7
Kitchens rearranged or improved for convenience.....	127,075	13.2
Families assisted in making home-made equipment or conveniences.....	345,911	153.3
Volunteer local leaders assisting in house-furnishings program.....	94,280	108.1

IMPROVEMENT OF HOME GROUNDS

Surroundings of some 150,000 rural homes were made more beautiful because of better lawns, more shrubbery and trees, and attention given to walks, drives, and fences. Families who enroll in this program are helped to develop a long-time plan for their home grounds and agree to make a few changes each year.

Homemakers in one California county set the following goal for themselves, "Do at least five things to improve the exterior of the home this year." Most of these goals were accomplished through cooperation of husbands in moving machinery, debris, and old cars, the exchange of shrubs and plants among the women themselves, and help from local nursery men. Garden days, plant exchanges, outdoor living-room contests, and tours to visit homes with improved grounds were popular means of teaching.

New publications used in teaching include -

- Evergreens for the Home Grounds, - Wisconsin.
- Home Beautification. - Tennessee.
- Garden Roses. - Ohio.
- Lawns for Louisiana.

The following statement from a North Carolina report expresses the interest of rural families in beautifying their home surroundings: "Reports given by leaders would cause a glow of pride and satisfaction to any person interested in the progress of the rural homes. Green lawns with curving driveways are replacing bare grounds kept clean with a dog-wood brush broom, and the working areas of the farmstead are being screened by hedges or fences that have beautified the whole place and made it a rural country home in the full meaning of the term."

BETTER FAMILY LIFE -- AN IMPORTANT ASSET IN DEMOCRACY

Sound physical and mental health for every family member are objectives of this phase of the extension program. Working toward these goals, parents in group discussions considered such topics as: Training for good habits; Building a well rounded personality; Getting along together in the family; and Fundamentals of successful marriage. Father as well as mother took part in many of these discussions. Special attention was given to family situations growing out of the defense program, including the topic: How Is Our Family Meeting Changes Caused by the Draft?

Fifteen States employed 19 full-time specialists in this field, and 6 States designated part-time specialists to carry on this work. In States without specialists, work on child development and family life was integrated with other extension programs.

Michigan's program, Successful Family Life, included discussions on Helping your child to accept responsibility, Learning to use money wisely, and Newer ways with sex education. Parents talked over ways to adapt the home to meet needs of the children. Some of the changes made were: Lower shelves for books and toys, bulletin boards to list responsibilities, better food habits, self-help clothing, and providing an allowance. Another result was that the number of homes using the family council as a method of solving family problems increased from 52 to 242.

Table 3. - Progress reported in better family life program - 1940

Item	Number, 1940	Increased percentage over 1939
Families improving habits of children.....	89,198	7.4
Women participating in child development and parent education program.....	140,956	1.6
Men participating in child development and parent education program.....	13,727	46.8
Volunteer local leaders assisting.....	20,577	15.8

Circulars used in teaching include the following:

Building Habits That Work for You.)
Growing Up With Music.) - Iowa,
Constructive Discipline.)
Chats With Father. - New Jersey.
Around the Dining Table. - Texas.

FAMILY ECONOMICS

Financial Planning

Family financial planning has been making a slow but steady growth in recent years. Programs are carried on under such titles as: Planning for Economic Security; The Family Talks Dollars and Cents; Making the Most of Your Resources; The Family and Its Business.

Home demonstration workers have found that their teaching in this field "catches on" better if a case study of one family is used as a basis for discussion. So, Louisiana used the William Greens and Nebraska the John Freemans.

In Iowa the Paul Livingstone family provided the theme for the State-wide program, Adventures in Family Finance. In some counties these adventures were compared to an ocean voyage, and the following topics were discussed in homemakers' groups:

1. How much will it cost?

Comparing expenses with those of the Livingstone family, homemakers estimated their own living costs for the year ahead and made spending plans.

2. Where do we get the money?

Sources of income were considered in the light of outlook for agriculture and farm family living.

3. Who sets the sails?

Family planning.

4. Of what use is the compass?

Family goals.

5. Who keeps the log?

Home records.

Use of the case-study method invariably leads to profitable discussion of alternate choices which the Greens, Freemans, or Livingstones might make, i.e., raising food or buying it, sewing at home or having store clothes.

Many homemakers are led to study family living costs through keeping home records. More than 46,000 families kept home accounts in 1940 according to a recommended plan. Such statements as these are typical of results: "We worked out a barter system with the doctor. Our family gets the best of medical care, and in return the doctor's family gets high-quality eggs, cream, and vegetables, fruit, meats, and poultry." Another said, "Our account book started the family back to church, I got ashamed of that empty column under 'Church and Charities.'"

Other results of extension programs in family economics included: (1) Realization of economic value of farm-produced food and fuel. (2) Keener appreciation of advantages of farm living. (3) Better understanding by young people of family financial problems. (4) Working together of the whole family in an effort to increase income and management of that income to the satisfaction of all.

Farm and Home Unit Demonstrations

Farm and home unit demonstrations or "whole farm" demonstrations have been making a slow, steady growth, especially in the Southern States. The purpose is the establishment and maintenance of a satisfactory standard of living for farm families through intelligent planning and wise use of resources. All plans are built around increasing the farm income through proper use of the land and attaining a more abundant living and richer family life through proper home management and planning. This demonstration involves making a long-time farm and home plan as well as plans for the current year's operations. In farm and home unit demonstrations, the Extension Service cooperates with many agencies. The family, in some instances, has borrowed money from FSA, and in that case FSA supervisors, extension agents, and specialists work together with the family in developing plans.

In Texas from one to five families are enrolled in each county, and there are frequent field days, community short courses, and training schools for agents held at these farm and home unit demonstrations. On many farms in Texas and in other States promoting this type of teaching, substantial increases in farm income and better home-management practices have already been brought about.

Consumer Education

Extension programs on "buymanship" were in direct response to such questions as, "What shall I look for when I buy a refrigerator? A new stove? How can I tell if I am getting my money's worth when I buy children's shoes? A living-room rug, a winter coat?"

Discussions in home demonstration clubs and educational tours to stores and manufacturing plants covered a wide field of consumer information ranging from how to choose vitamin rich food to getting good value when buying paint.

Table 4. - Increased activities in 1940 in consumer education

Accomplishment	Number, 1940	Percentage of increase over 1939
Families following:		
Recommendations for buying home equipment and house furnishings.....	115,621	13.6
Clothes-buying recommendations.....	184,999	11.0
Food-buying recommendations.....	203,906	13.7

BETTER CLOTHING AT MODERATE COST

The extension clothing program with adults and 4-H Club members helped more than 641,000 people to save approximately 5 million dollars in 1940. Home sewing continued to be an excellent way to "stretch" the clothing dollar in farm homes. Coat schools, clothes remodeling clinics, ABC sewing courses for young homemakers, and cotton-dress contests flourished.

Effective teaching devices included use of the silhouette camera, colored slides showing "before and after," pictures of women who studied dress selection, demonstration kits of closet accessories and of childrens' clothes, hosiery exhibits, and tours to shopping centers.

The number of sewing-machine clinics showed a marked increase. Agricultural engineers and clothing specialists taught volunteer leaders in many States how to clean and oil the "old model." They in turn helped members of their neighborhood home demonstration groups.

Some new bulletins helpful in the clothing program were: Dress Fitting (construction and design) (Ala.); Good Tailoring (Wis.); Decorative Needlework for Clothing (Oreg.); Wardrobe Planning, Clothing Accounts (Okla.); Six Guides to a Well Designed Dress; Know Your Fabrics; Personalizing Color in Clothes (Ill.).

Table 5. - Growth of certain phases of the clothing program - 1940

Item	Number 1940	Percentage of increase over 1939
Persons following recommendations:		
In construction of clothing (adults and juniors).....	641,824	6.2
In improving clothing care, renovation and remodeling (adults and juniors).....	354,752	9.9
In clothing selection (adults and juniors)....	538,649	5.4
Sewing machines repaired.....	22,731	29.1
Voluntary local leaders assisting in clothing program.....	79,980	6.1

FARM WOMENS' MARKETS

Farm womens' markets, mostly in the Southern States, continued to prosper. Meats, poultry, and eggs, home-made cookies, bread, and rolls, cottage cheese, and flowers found a ready sale through these markets and brought added income to thousands of farm families.

In North Carolina, for example, there were 48 curb markets which operated successfully with 2,045 producers selling regularly. Markets were open 1 or 2 days a week, and the total value of products sold at these North Carolina markets in 1940 was more than \$400,000.

HANDICRAFT

Every year there are many requests for extension assistance in teaching farm women to do various types of handicrafts such as braided and hooked rugs, weaving, chair seating, and small decorative accessories. Most of these articles are used to add beauty and color to these farm women's own homes, but some women develop a high degree of skill and craftsmanship and are able to sell their products at a good price.

Much of this work is taught trained leaders and more than 142,000 families were assisted by this program in 1940.

IMPROVED MORALE THROUGH WELL-USED LEISURE TIME

As the home life of more and more families was affected by defense, extension recreation programs were appraised in the light of their con-

contribution to the physical well-being and mental stability of individuals. More emphasis was put on family recreation, and there was an increase in community-centered activities for school-age youth. Greater interest was evident in the development of talents that can be enjoyed without equipment or expense.

Opportunities have been made for both youths and adults to forget worries in joyous activities, to find satisfactions in music, dramatics, hobbies, and friends. As one specialist put it, "The emphasis is on being rather than having."

Helpful bulletins were issued, such as: Recreation for 4-H and Other Groups (Ohio); Singing Games and How To Do Them (Mass.); How To Choose a Play and How To Write One (N. Y.)

CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

Discussion of national problems was fostered by home demonstration workers, and groups of rural homemakers in several States set aside a part of their time at each home demonstration club meeting for discussion of such topics as Democracy in the Present Crisis, and Our Responsibility as Citizens. Usually one of the group was chosen as discussion leader and received special training for the task.

In rural-urban women's conferences held in a number of States, discussion of the theme, Do We Have Abundance in America? brought to light differences and similarities of problems of persons engaged in industry, labor, and agriculture. Those who participated in such discussions were impressed by the interdependence between these groups and realized anew the necessity of joint effort if "abundance" is to be achieved.

RURAL WOMEN PARTICIPATE IN LAND USE PLANNING

As land use planning work spread to new counties, women were included as members of State, county, and community committees. In several States where the work was already established, more women were added to these committees. In general the women took special interest in social problems affecting home and community such as: Nutrition, health, medical care, education, housing, sanitation, and recreation. They assisted especially with levels of living studies, health and nutrition surveys, housing studies including inventory of houses equipped with electricity and running water, garden studies, mapping of telephone lines.

Some results of women's activities as members of land use committees were establishment of school lunches, a greater volume of home-produced food by farm families, analyzing of water supply by State boards of health, improved sanitation programs, expansion of electricity lines, and expansion of county health units and nursing services.

In Colorado, specific accomplishments were obtaining rural-library services and changing school-bus routes; in Texas, the county land use planning committee was responsible for having a home demonstration agent employed in the county.

VOLUNTEER LEADERS TRAIN FOR GREATER SERVICE

The number of volunteer leaders in home demonstration work reached a new high in 1940 with 286,000 women serving in this capacity, an increase of 21 percent over 1939. More than 67,000 other women and 27,000 older girls served as leaders of 4-H Clubs. These women represent an active educational force in their communities. In addition to the direct teaching they do in home demonstration groups, they serve as local sources of information on home-economics subject matter.

As the defense program got under way with many unexpected demands on the home demonstration agents' time, trained leaders assumed greater responsibilities. In addition to their usual activities, they helped to make nutrition surveys, assisted with the mattress program, and increased their assistance with school lunches.

Many home demonstration groups sponsored community-service projects which were carried on almost entirely through volunteer leadership. As one home demonstration leader said, "There is no greater evidence of progress of home demonstration work than the broad viewpoint taken by home demonstration club members toward their responsibilities in the community in which they live."

Community projects included medical and dental clinics, school lunches, clean-up and paint-up campaigns, building community clubhouses, beautifying school and church yards. One club supplied home-canned foods for a hospital, another equipped a hospital nursery. In one Colorado home demonstration club, members had their blood typed for transfusion and are on call by doctors for that service. A community project that gave pleasure to both young and old in another Colorado county was the skating rink built by a home demonstration club. The women raised money for cement and other materials by holding "baked sales" and the men donated the labor. Many community libraries and "bookmobiles" throughout the country are results of home demonstration effort.

In many States, home demonstration clubs sponsored community "sings" for both men and women. Home demonstration choruses are now well established in all sections of the country and like the other activities listed, serve to promote neighborliness, good will, and community spirit.

A Virginia homemaker commenting on this community spirit said, "We have become more interested in government, better schools, religious affairs, and best of all there has developed a leadership which I never would have thought possible."

